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CHAPTER 6

Modernity and the Satanic Face of God

MICHAEL J. BUCKLEY, S.J.

The religious intellect must recognize that in the nineteenth century it confronts a unique situation, unprecedented both in the depth of its challenge and in the extension of its claims. During that period, the denial of the reality of God rose to achieve an articulate and influential presence within the intellectual culture of western Europe. This denial was no longer the persuasion of this or that idiosyncratic figure such as Diagoras of Melos or Theodore of Cyrene in pre-Christian antiquity; nor did it constitute the mentality of a peculiarly enlightened cast such as the d'Holbachian circle in Paris in the eighteenth century. During the nineteenth century, "the eclipse of God" advanced much farther, descending massively upon modernity and upon the world that it embraced as non-European nations fell under the influence of Western thought. This eclipse circumscribed an absence of religious faith or of any living theistic affirmation, together with an attendant sense of alienation, indifference, or hostility toward religious doctrines, presence, and institutions. This atheism or secularism or agnosticism together with its cognate indifference or contempt for the religious was unique within the history of the world in the public acceptance it secured during that century, in the ascendancy within particular subcultures it gained, and in the rapidity of increase it enjoyed among intellectuals and the formative sources of culture. It came to shadow all ranks of society in Europe, from workers to bourgeoisie to intellectuals, gathering strength to spill into the twentieth century with an ideational force unmatched since the Protestant Reformation.

During this steady devolution of religious affirmation, not only did the judgment about the validity of religious belief fall under suspicion and question, but the nature or content of religious ideas themselves did as well. The religious culture of Europe was being reconfigured because the notion of "God" was being reconfigured. God was coming to be seen now as the alienation of the

human species in favor of an imaginary subject or as the structure of the human society now writ large or as the projection out of fear and longing of oedipal necessities. Each of these reconfigurations lent new shapes to political economy or theology, literature, philosophy, and rhetoric. Emerging as the psychological dynamic that explained religious ideas were such terms as *Vergegenständlichung* and *Entäusserung,* objectification and alienation, and the face of God changed, as in some way the hermeneutics of suspicion registered the human interests that had created it.[1]

But there was another, very different historical development in modernity's disclosure of the profound projection within religious belief. The initial grammars of religion revealed that the human was the truth of the divine. The second wave of interpretation would tear off this mask and see beneath it not the human but the antihuman. God is revealed as — to borrow a term from Spanish mysticism — *el enemigo de natura humana,* the enemy of human nature. The discovery of this equation between the divine and the diabolical was both the product of the nineteenth century and one of the fundamental reversals of the sacred in the history of religion. This discovery the following essay attempts to outline in a series of very broad brush strokes. To do so, it proposes: (1) to indicate something of the dialectic that lies at the origins of modern atheism, the paradoxical sources of modern atheism;[2] (2) to examine the radical shift in fundamental thinking that took place in the nineteenth century — in what Hobbes called the "First Grounds of Philosophy"; (3) to trace the effect that this produced in the basic evidence advanced for the reality of God; (4) to outline some classic moments in the massive rise in atheistic consciousness that these philosophical and theological arguments dialectically occasioned; (5) to identify the "god" that emerges from these counterpositions.

1. See Michael J. Buckley, "Atheism and Contemplation," *Theological Studies* 40 (1979): 680-99. Eugene Kamenka maintains that "the psychological use of the word 'projection' in English originated in George Eliot's translation of the *Essence of Christianity.* She used it to render Feuerbach's (Hegelian) terms *Vergegenständlichung* (objectification, reification) and *Entäusserung* (alienation)." See Eugene Kamenka, *The Philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 167 n. 43. It should be noted, however, that Ralph Waldo Emerson, some ten years before Eliot's translation, makes the world "a projection of God in the unconscious," and consequently it is "to us, the present expositor of the divine mind." *Nature,* in *The Complete Essays and Other Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson,* ed. Brooks Atkinson (New York: Random House, 1940), vol. 7, p. 36.

2. I have elsewhere suggested this pattern of internal contradiction at the origins of modern atheism and would like in this paper to follow it as it was transposed in the nineteenth century, the golden age of atheism. Cf. Michael J. Buckley, S.J., *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990). This initial section is little more than a précis of the findings of that work. For a brilliant and incisive cultural critique of the project and of the revolution that was modernity, see Louis Dupré, *Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

I. At the Origins

The ideational origins of modern atheism lie remarkably with the strategies employed against it. It was generated and shaped by the attempt to provide for the affirmation of the existence of God by using the new sciences as the fundamental and irrefragable basis for such an affirmation. Thus Isaac Newton maintained that the "main Business of natural Philosophy is to argue from Phaenomena without feigning Hypotheses, and to deduce Causes from Effects, till we come to the very first Cause, which certainly is not mechanical."[3] By the beginnings of the eighteenth century, design in nature furnished the comprehensive warrant for the illation to the affirmation of God. Only a divine cause could account for design in the universe, from the solar system to the structure of organic bodies. The inference from design to designer would serve as the principal foundation for later discussions of the divine nature, moral theology, and the possibility of divine revelation. Hundreds of studies came out under the inspiration of so great a genius as Newton, physico-theologies giving the grounding for the assertions of God by arguing from design in nature. Theologians were generally enthusiastic.

But few noticed what such an approach omitted. It bracketed all religious experience as cognitively irrelevant, as implicitly empty. While it formulated a "natural theology" that found patterns in the physical universe and then argued to a supreme geometer/architect/παντοκρατωρ — to omnipotent intelligence and power — it found nothing in the history of the human involvement with God in Christianity or Judaism that bore seriously upon this issue. The single phrase that captures the great enterprise and influence of Isaac Newton was "universal mechanics," a mechanics that provided not only the foundations of mathematics, but the rational basis for all theology and religion. Such a universal mechanics, Newton argued, while all-embracing, must have principles or warranted sources of explanation that were finally not mechanical.

Superseded by this universal mechanics was the attempt of some sixty years before to provide a rational basis for religion. Descartes, followed by Malebranche, had formulated a first philosophy that found the warrant for God in the content of ideas that confronted the thinking subject. For Descartes, mechanics was a limited, not a universal, discipline, and everything it studied was to be explained by only mechanical principles. He had saved mechanics from theology by laying the grounds for the affirmation of the existence of God in a first philosophy that was not mechanics, but an independent metaphysics. Thus the disciplines were distinct and mechanics was limited, but it was autonomous.

3. Isaac Newton, *Optics, or a Treatise of the Reflections, Refractions, Influctions, and Colours of Light,* ed. Duane H. D. Roller (New York: Dover, 1952), Query 28, p. 369.

what one must understand "before" — as the grounding for all other disciplined inquiry — although one often comes upon that "before" long after other disciplines have been pursued. One often comes upon the first last.[4] In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the focus of fundamental thinking was on the reality that confronted or surrounded the thinking subject, whether as the content of ideas as with Descartes or all the phenomena of the physical universe. Thus Thomas Hobbes, from that intellectual era, would insist that "The First Grounds of Philosophy" must deal directly with the physical universe and so combine the geometry that studied simply the motion of things, as in Galileo's mechanics, and the physics that bore upon the general properties of bodies. After this foundation is laid in a grasp of the nature of things, one can go on to study the human person and political society or the state.

II. The Shift in Fundamental Thinking

In the writings, the enormously influential writings, of John Locke, one can find the beginnings of an intellectual revolution against this priority of investigation into the nature of things or into the Cartesian content of ideas. With Locke, a sea change began in fundamental thinking. One has only to open to Locke's "Epistle to the Reader," the preface to his masterpiece, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*. This "Epistle" was necessary, thought Locke, to understand how the essay itself came about. Many before and after Locke had embarked upon a similar journey in inquiry. But Locke made the understanding of understanding the foundation of all exploration and inquiry. A turn to the subject had already been initiated by Descartes, but he grounded his first philosophy not upon the processes of understanding, but upon the content of ideas. In contrast, Locke would study the processes themselves. Richard Rorty has noted quite correctly: "We owe the notion of a 'theory of knowledge' based on an understanding of 'mental processes' to the seventeenth century, and especially to Locke."[5] The necessity that an analysis

4. The concept of "fundamental thinking" is derived from Richard McKeon's formulation and use of "general selection characteristics of the philosophic communication of a period" as well as from the distinctions that he drew within general selection and brought to bear so perceptively upon the history of thought. See Richard P. McKeon, "Philosophic Semantics and Philosophic Inquiry," in *Freedom and History and Other Essays: An Introduction to the Thought of Richard McKeon*, ed. Zahava K. McKeon (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1990), pp. 251-52.

5. Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 3. Rorty distinguishes Locke's contribution from that of Descartes: "We owe the notion of 'the mind' as a separate entity in which 'processes' occur to the same period, and especially to Descartes" (pp. 3-4).

of the processes of thought form the prior foundation for statements about the processes of things distinguishes John Locke:

> Were it fit to trouble thee with the History of this Essay, I should tell thee that five or six Friends meeting at my Chamber, and discoursing on a Subject very remote from this [the principles of morality and revealed religion], found themselves quickly at a stand, by the Difficulties that rose on every side. After we had awhile puzzled our selves, without coming any nearer a Resolution of those Doubts which perplexed us, it came into my Thoughts that we took a wrong course; and that, *before* we set our selves upon Enquiries of that Nature, it was necessary to examine *our own Abilities, and see, what Objects our Understandings were, or were not fitted to deal with.* This I proposed to the Company, who all readily assented; and thereupon it was agreed, that this should be our *first Enquiry.*[6]

This is very different "fundamental thinking" from that found in Descartes or Newton or Hobbes. In the early months of 1671, during these important conversations at Exeter House, Locke was transferring the focus of foundational thought from the exploration of that which confronts the thinking subject — such as issues about "the principles of morality and revealed religion" — to the processes of thinking themselves.[7] The "Epistle to the Reader" insisted upon an antecedent epistemological foundation, upon a consideration of the potentialities for human knowing and their commensurate "objects," before attempting to deal with problems that immediately touch the nature of things. "First inquiry" should be epistemological. What Locke modestly "proposed to the Company, who all readily assented" in the country home of Lord Ashley, soon to be first earl of Shaftesbury, was actually a sweeping change within modernity.

The emphasis that Locke gave to the processes of thought gathered force in the years that followed and ran full steam into the works and subsequent influence of Immanuel Kant. His three *Critiques* were to transpose all fundamental reflection into this new key: "I do not mean by this a critique of books and systems, but of the faculty of reason in general, in respect of all knowledge after which it may strive independently of all experience. It will therefore decide as to the possibility or impossibility of metaphysics in general."[8] Before one

6. John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding,* ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), "Epistle to the Reader," p. 7 (emphasis added).

7. One of these friends, James Tyrrell, records in the marginalia he appended to his copy of the essay that the conversation had been "about the principles of morality and revealed religion." For this, as also for the dating and location of these conversations, see Maurice Cranston, *John Locke: A Biography* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), pp. 140-41.

8. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* trans. and ed. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1963), "Preface to First Edition," p. 9.

launches into metaphysics or natural theology or universal mechanics, one must analyze the knowing of the knower to determine what could be known; otherwise human inquiry yielded only transcendental illusion. Before one explores morality and ethics, one must analyze the practical intellect or *Wille* and the human ability to determine itself freely to choose. Before one deals with the beautiful and the sublime, with taste and genius, one must understand the reflexivity or harmony that is possible between the imagination in its representations and the understanding in its judgment. Again, Kant did not originate this flood; he augmented and sanctioned it for the century that was to follow. Under his blessings, these waters became holy. Disciplines bearing such names as epistemology or criticism or phenomenologies of spirit or cognitional theory became foundational in nineteenth-century modernity. One had to look at human capacities, at the various potentialities for knowledge and choice and even taste, in order to determine what the proper objects of these potentialities are. When this was established, one could bring these powers to bear upon questions of inquiry and decision without the dangers of irresolvable contradiction and conflicts. One must gauge the human first.

The foundational importance of the self-appropriation of the knowing subject carried persuasion also in theology, entering emphatically into the inquiries of the greatest Protestant theologian of the nineteenth century, Friedrich Schleiermacher. Here one finds a primordial dependence of all discussion of theological subjects or the propositions of religion upon the prior assessment of immediate consciousness, variously formulated as either the feeling and intuition of the infinite or the feeling of absolute dependence.

Kant and Schleiermacher, as Fred Lawrence has so well maintained, represent two distinctly different kinds of foundational consciousness.[9] Kant tethered reason, understanding, or judgment to consciousness as a perception of objects; like Rousseau, Schleiermacher rooted them in the perception of feelings, the feeling of feeling, that he sometimes referred to as "sentiment." What Kant was for philosophy, Schleiermacher was for theology. Both gave a foundational priority to human subjectivity — not in the sense of an arbitrary imposition of meanings, but in the sense of the subject as agent, possessing its own internal structure of mind or spirit, whose capacities must be determined as the fundamental security for subsequent affirmations. For both, the human subject came first; the human subject would measure the things that it would engage. Not nature, but human nature had become fundamental.

9. Fred Lawrence, "The Fragility of Consciousness: Lonergan and the Postmodern Concern for the Other," *Theological Studies* 54 (1993): 58-62.

III. Theistic Argumentation in a New Key

As this revolution swept through modernity, Kant and Schleiermacher transposed the arguments for the reality of God into a new key. They formulated disciplines for so much of the philosophy and theology that would follow them, disciplines that were to shift the issue of God to human subjectivity for its fundamental point of departure. Kant provided critiques, while Schleiermacher explored "religion." In both God emerged as a necessity to deal with human life and experience. God was an entailment of the human.

The *Critique of Practical Reason* laid the foundation for ethical reasoning and for the metaphysics of morals in the centrality of human freedom. The living of a human life, the entire ethical enterprise, presupposed human nature as free. Freedom — which was to dominate the nineteenth century's inquiries into the human — identified with the subjectivity that was human nature and was itself the originator of the moral life:

> By "nature of man" we here intend only the subjective ground of the exercise (under objective moral laws) of man's freedom in general; this ground — whatever is its character — is the necessary antecedent of every act apparent to the senses. But this subjective ground, again, must itself always be an expression of freedom (for otherwise, the use or abuse of man's power of choice [*Willkür*] in respect of the moral law could not be imputed to him nor could the good or bad in him be called moral). Hence the source of evil cannot lie in an object determining the will [*Willkür*] through inclination, nor yet in a natural impulse; it can lie only in a rule made by the will [*Willkür*] for the use of its freedom, i.e. in a maxim.[10]

Freedom in Kant is both potency and act. It is the transcendental power to choose, the independence of *Willkür* from determination by external objects and by the impulses of past or present. It is the reflexive self-legislation of *Willkür,* shown in its selection of maxims by which to govern its exercise and in its selection of objects upon which its actions will devolve. One is free in transcendental freedom because one is one's own master, coerced in the process of choice by no external master. Secondly, freedom is also actualization or autonomy. Autonomy occurs when one chooses in accordance with the universal law, living free from external determination and realizing in actuality the moral potentiality of the human. Heteronomy occurs when one renounces one's power as a free being by choosing to act dependently upon the determinations of desires. In this sense, human life is the movement from freedom to freedom,

10. Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone,* trans. Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson, with a new essay by John R. Silber (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), bk. 1, pp. 16-17.

the freedom of *Willkür* to the freedom of autonomy, the freedom of potentiality to the freedom of actuality, and the path to this freedom of autonomy constitutes the ethical enterprise itself.[11]

For the internal coherence of human freedom, i.e., for human life to make sense morally, one must postulate the existence of God. The austere ethical imperative is to do one's duty, and duty dictates that one strive for the highest human good. This object conjoins virtue (dictated by duty) and happiness (which objectively ought to be united with virtue). The virtuous deserve to be happy. If this highest human good is imperative, it must be possible, and for this "possibility we must postulate a higher, moral, most holy, and omnipotent Being which alone can unite the two elements of this highest good."[12] Without God, the ethical or moral life is a movement into absurdity. One would be morally commanded or directed toward the impossible, toward a conjunction of happiness and virtue that only happenstance effects in human life — and even this rarely. Morality is only rationally coherent if the object of morality is itself seriously possible. Thus what human beings cannot effect must be within the power of another. There must be that omnipotent intelligence that can make possible the object of command, the "highest good." "Morality thus leads ineluctably to religion, through which it extends itself to the idea of a powerful moral Lawgiver, outside of mankind, for Whose will that is the final end (of creation) which at the same time can and ought to be man's final end."[13] In this way, God alone makes rational morality possible for human beings, and Jesus Christ is the exemplification of this morality.

For Schleiermacher, "religion" becomes the foundation for dogmatics and indeed for his greatest work, *Die Glaubenslehre,* and the basis of all religion is the consciousness of the infinite, or what in his more mature work he would call "the feeling of absolute dependence." Kant had deliberately excluded experience from the exercise of human freedom because "the philosopher, as teacher of pure reason (from unassisted principles a priori [in ethics]), must confine himself within the narrower circle, and, in so doing, must abstract from all experience."[14] For Schleiermacher, there is no parallel refusal of experience in

11. See John R. Silber, "The Ethical Significance of Kant's Religion," introduction to Kant, *Religion,* pp. lxxx-xcvi.

12. Kant, *Religion,* "Preface to the First Edition," pp. 4-5.

13. Kant, *Religion,* "Preface," pp. 5-6. The classic treatment of the existence of God as a postulate of pure practical reason is, of course, in book II of Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason,* chapter 5, "The Existence of God as a Postulate of Pure Practical Reason." See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason,* ed. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), pp. 128-36.

14. Kant, *Religion,* p. 11. This translation has been modified, since the German reads: ". . . von aller Erfahrung abstrahieren muß. . . ." Immanuel Kant, *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft,* ed. Karl Vorländer (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1990), p. 13.

favor of illation. On the contrary, one appeals to the fundamental experience that underlies all inference and even differentiated thought. Whether that immediacy be termed "intuition" or "feeling," it denotes a fundamental awareness, a self-consciousness given in every act of cognition. Now this self-consciousness is inseparable from God-consciousness — as doubt in Descartes is inseparable from existence:

> To feel oneself absolutely dependent and to be conscious of being in relation with God are one and the same thing; and the reason is that absolute dependence is the *fundamental* relation which must include all others in itself. This last expression includes the God-consciousness in the human self-consciousness in such a way that, quite in accordance with the above analysis, the two cannot be separated from each other. . . . God is given to us in feeling in an original way.[15]

God is an illation of ethics in Kant, making duty's object, the highest good, seriously possible; God is a given of the primordial experience of self-consciousness in Schleiermacher.

Through the influence of both thinkers, a critically important shift was taking place in modernity that would resituate fundamental thinking about the divine reality, a shift that Tennyson would both celebrate in *In Memoriam* and comment upon at the end of his life. He saw that the heady days of the religious use of nature were passing, or at least diminishing. Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830-33), with its demonstrations of the great age of the earth and the successive and massive extinction of species, had left "Nature red in tooth and claw / With ravine." Tennyson found that nature "shriek'd against his creed," leaving those who depended upon Nature's witness convinced that they must regard "life as futile, then, as frail."[16] The nineteenth-century thinker must turn elsewhere:

> Yet God *is* love, transcendent, all-pervading! We do not get *this* faith from Nature or the world. If we look at Nature alone, full of perfection and imperfection, she tells us that God is disease, murder and rapine. We get this faith from ourselves, from what is highest within us, which recognizes that there is not one fruitless pang, just as there is not one lost good.[17]

15. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith,* ed. H. R. MacIntosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), introduction, n. 4, p. 17 (emphasis added).

16. Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *Tennyson: In Memoriam,* ed. Susan Shatto and Marian Shaw (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), section 56, lines 15-16, 25, p. 80.

17. This remark is cited by his son and introduced with the remark: "After one of these moods in the summer of 1892, he [Tennyson] exclaimed. . . ." See Hallam, Lord Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir* (New York: Macmillan, 1897), as cited in *Alfred, Lord Tennyson, In Memoriam,* ed. Robert H. Ross (New York: Norton, 1973), p. 119. For the

"This faith from ourselves, from what is highest within us. . . ." Nature, for all the physics and universal mechanics it evokes, stills carries its history of destruction and deaths. It cannot establish the warrant for the existence of God. One must rather go to the inferences entailed by the critique of practical reason or to the experience fundamental to religion. For all of their contrasts and even contradictory procedures, what both critique and the analysis of religion have in common is what they both take as foundational: the radically human — in contradistinction with subhuman nature. The Kantian critique recognized that ethics engages an activity that is uniquely human, the way human beings should decide and act and live; Schleiermacher saw that human passivity is engaged by religion, the manner of human experience, preconceptual "feelings," change worked by the influence of an object, which reveals its existence to one in the inner consciousness.

> The same is true for religion. The same actions of the universe through which it reveals itself to you in the finite also bring it into a new relationship to your mind and your condition; in the act of intuiting it, you must necessarily be seized by various feelings. In religion, however, a different and stronger relationship between intuition and feeling takes place, and intuition never predominates so much that feeling is almost extinguished.
>
> On the contrary, is it really a miracle if the eternal world affects the senses of our spirit as the sun affects our eyes? Is it a miracle when the sun so blinds us that everything else disappears, not only at that moment, but even long afterward all objects we observe are imprinted with its image and bathed in its brilliance? Just as the particular manner in which the universe presents itself to you in your intuitions and determines the uniqueness of your individual religion, so the strength of these feelings determines the degree of religiousness.[18]

Nature does not provide the warrant for God; the warrant for God is found in human nature, either active in its choices or passive in its immediate experience or feeling.

So profound and pervasive is this shift to human nature as foundational for dealing with the reality of God that both Kant and Schleiermacher can cite it as the linchpin of their fundamental works. Kant's four books on religion become the study of human nature:

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influence of Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830-33) and its demonstrations of the great age of the earth and the successive extinction of species, see Eleanor D. Mattes, *In Memoriam: The Way of a Soul* (New York: Exposition Press, 1951), pp. 55-61, 73-86, 111-25, as excerpted in *Alfred, Lord Tennyson,* ed. Ross, pp. 120ff.

18. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers,* trans. Richard Crouter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), Speech II, pp. 109-10.

> In order to make apparent the relation of religion to human nature (endowed in part with good, in part with evil predispositions), I represent, in the four following essays, the relationship of the good and evil principles as that of the two self-subsistent active causes influencing men.[19]

The purpose of Schleiermacher's *Reden* is stated: "I wish to lead you to the innermost depths from which religion first addresses the mind. I wish to show you from what capacity of humanity religion proceeds, and how it belongs to what is for you the highest and dearest." Precisely for its engagement of the human in such depths, this inquiry is not for all, maintains Schleiermacher, but only for "you" who are capable of "raising yourselves above the common standpoint of humanity, you who do not shrink from the burdensome way into the depths of human nature in order to find the ground of its actions and thought."[20]

And how does one move "into the depths of human nature"? Through the differentiation among three disciplines and the recognition and prosecution of religion as one of them. For metaphysics finds its essence in thinking; morality, in acting and doing; but religion, in intuition and feeling. In Schleiermacher, God emerges as the active source of these feelings; God is even given a nominal definition in terms of the feeling of absolute dependence: "the *Whence* of our receptive and active existence, as implied in this self-consciousness, is to be designated by the word 'God,' and that this is for us the really original signification of that word."[21] The original human awareness of God is simply of that which is the codeterminant in this feeling. Thus to feel oneself absolutely dependent and to be conscious of being in relation to God is one and the same thing. In this sense, God is given to immediate human awareness, i.e., in feeling, in "an original way." Indeed, this can be recognized as "an original revelation of God to man or in man."[22]

One can only remark about the radical contrast this offers to the major and most influential thinkers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In these previous centuries, heady with the emergence of the universal competence of the new mechanics, nature or design or the content of ideas or things had provided the evidence for asserting the divine existence. Now the battleground is confined to human nature and its entailments. This recasting of the foundations of religion provides the theological point of departure for the nineteenth century: What is it to be human, and how does this warrant necessitate the affirmation or denial of God?

19. Kant, *Religion*, p. 10.
20. Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, p. 87.
21. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, p. 16.
22. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, pp. 17-18.

IV. The Humanistic Foundations of the Emergent Atheism

The dialectical reversal of theistic positions that obtained in early modernity repeated itself analogously within the changed coordinates of the nineteenth century. In these earlier centuries, the strategies to rationalize the divine existence furnish the weapons to attack. The positive generated its own commensurate self-contradiction. In the nineteenth century, philosophy and theology had moved to ground religious affirmation on the entailments of human nature; now they will be contradicted on the same ground in the struggle that Henri de Lubac so aptly called "the drama of atheistic humanism."[23]

One must begin with the originating genius of this movement, Ludwig Feuerbach — a Bavarian theological student become philosopher under the instruction of Hegel, only to become atheist — the man whose writings were so successful, so influential that Marx saluted him as the great precursor of dialectical atheism and Freud held him as his favorite philosopher.[24] Atheism came as the climax of his intellectual development, and he summarized the steps of his growth in this way: "God was my first thought; Reason my second; Man, my third and last thought."[25] Respect for the character of nineteenth-century fundamental thinking dictated that Feuerbach begin the *Essence of Christianity* with an analysis of the essential nature of the human person as self-consciousness, i.e., consciousness of species. He could deduce his conclusions about the source and object of religion from the phenomenon that human beings have religion while brutes do not, and that this must derive from this species-consciousness. In his third edition he placed his central thesis at the very beginning: "The essence of the human being [self-consciousness] in differentiation from the beasts is not only the ground or cause, but also the object of religion."[26] The figure of God, the object of religion, is a projection of the human essence. God is the human writ large as species.

Feuerbach argues to this cardinal fact of projection, that the true sense of

23. Henri de Lubac, *The Drama of Atheistic Humanism,* trans. Edith M. Riley (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1950).

24. See Kamenka, *The Philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach,* pp. vii-viii, 16, 27, 117-18; Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (New York: Norton, 1988), pp. 28-29, 532. On March 7, 1875, Freud wrote to Edward Silverstein: "Among all philosophers, I worship and admire this man (Feuerbach) the most." See Gay, p. 28.

25. Cited from Ludwig Feuerbach's *Philosophical Fragments* by Kamenka, p. 39.

26. Ludwig Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums,* ed. Werner Schuffenhauer, 3rd ed. (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1973), p. 29 n. 3. This sentence appears in the third edition, done in 1849 while Feuerbach still lived. The celebrated English translation, *The Essence of Christianity,* trans. George Eliot from the 2nd rev. ed. of 1843 (New York: Harper, 1957), was first published in London in 1854. The German original of this addition to the third edition reads: "Das Wesen des Menschen im Unterschied vom Tiere ist nicht nur der Grund, sondern auch der Gegendstand der Religion."

theology is anthropology, from three dimensions of human nature: human consciousness, linguistic predication, and the history of human alienation — consciousness, language, and history.

(1) The nature of human self-consciousness: the object that is essentially known reveals the subject to itself. When such an essential object does not have its independent existence guaranteed by sense perception, it is nothing more than the essential nature of the subject. (2) The essential humanity of the divine attributes — such as wise, blessed, provident: What is predicated of God is taken from human experience and is true of human beings alone. Now the truth of the subject is found in its predicates. Since the divine predicates are human, their subject is also human. (3) Commensurate alienation: what human beings ascribe to God has been historically subtracted or alienated from the human essence. One can trace this through the history of religions or theology. That God may be enriched as good and holy, the human person must be seen as poor and sinful.[27]

That such projection of the human into an alien subject should take place is to be understood as a stage in human self-appropriation through otherness. If one fixates at this stage, however, one formulates the illusions that are theology. But the developments of cultural history have reached a time of further progress. Philosophy, now the interpreter of the truth of religion, is called to reappropriate these "divine" attributes for the human, to restore to human beings their grandeur. One does not eliminate the divine predicates, but only the imaginary divine subject of these attributes. The attributes are true not of this supernatural illusion, but of the human actuality. What is "God" in this state of illusion? The alienation of the human from itself: "a perversion, a distortion; which, however, the more perverted and false it is, all the more appears to be profound."[28] Feuerbach's inquiries mount what is basically a philosophical grammar in the medieval sense of "grammar" as a *scientia interpretandi* or *ars interpretandi,* a science or a technique for the understanding of the meaning of fundamental symbols.[29]

Karl Marx accepted Feuerbach's critique of religion, but modified it in two ways: he insisted upon the social-economic sources of the origin and fixation of this projection; and he rejected Feuerbach's strategy of reflexive assimilation or hermeneutical recognition in favor of the destructive and trans-

27. This is the burden of the initial chapter of *The Essence of Christianity.* These three basic argument are repeated in Feuerbach's other works. See Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity,* pp. 1-32.

28. Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity,* p. 231.

29. For the medieval sense of "grammar," see Michael J. Buckley, S.J., "Towards the Construction of Theology: A Response to Richard McKeon," *Journal of Religion* 58, Supplement (1978): S58-S59, esp. n. 15. It was Rabanus Maurus who recaptured for the Middle Ages the definition of Marius Victorinus and brought it to bear upon the world of symbols.

formational activity of the "revolutionary principle." He changed Feuerbach's human person from a contemplative interpreter to a practical agent whose transitive activity is to change social structures. One does not simply interpret alienation; one destroys it — in the social order. Marx moved materialism from a reflexive principle to a revolutionary principle. This shift is what Marx refers to in his classic eleventh thesis against Feuerbach: "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it."[30] Grammar was not enough, and if grammar was the discipline most analogous to Feuerbach's enterprise, rhetoric seems most apt for Marx.

The human being is sensuous and practical, and for this emphasis Marx changes the meaning of this last term, collapsing the distinction between Aristotle's πραξις and ποῦγιησις — so that "practical" now contains the "poetic" activity that creates a new world. The human being is not an abstract essence, but economic and social and essentially called to a much greater factive activity than Feuerbach understood. The failure of Feuerbach's materialism was that it did not grasp human activity's revolutionary and transitive (not contemplative) character, that it essentially passes into the external world and into the lives of other human beings, that it inescapably forms community, and that this practical activity constitutes all reality, all objects.

Truth is not discovered; it is constituted by this activity. Human beings make their world true. Anything else is scholasticism! To realize this human dynamism in practice is to come into possession of one's humanity. This realization of what it means to be human carries with it an enormous responsibility for the world and for the lot of human beings. The philosopher must not simply realize this alienation that religion entails, but must destroy it in its social and economic roots. "Once the earthly family is discovered to be the secret of the holy family, the former must then itself be criticized in theory and revolutionized in practice."[31] Religious critique has a priority over economics and politics; it is the presupposition of all other criticism. Marx's *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* insists that only this critique can restore the human essence to the human being, make the human being free enough to drive this criticism deeper into the criticism of right and of politics for "religion is only the illusory sun which revolves round man as long as he does not revolve round himself."[32] Hence to restore the revolutionary principle to the human

30. Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," in *Marx and Engels on Religion,* introduction by Reinhold Niebuhr (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), p. 72 (emphasis added).

31. Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," Thesis no. 4, p. 70.

32. Karl Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right,* in *Marx and Engels on Religion,* pp. 41-42. "The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is required for their real happiness. The demand to give up the illusions about its condition is the demand to give up a condition which needs illusion. The criticism of religion is therefore in embryo the criticism of the vale of woe, the halo of which is religion" (p. 42).

means a critique of fundamental human alienation, religion, and only "the criticism of religion ends with the teaching that *man is the highest essence for man,* hence with the *categoric imperative to overthrow all relations* in which man is debased, enslaved, abandoned, despicable essence."[33]

In a stunning reversal of Kant and Schleiermacher, God is now the one who alienates men and women from their humanity, both speculatively as in Feuerbach and ideologically in the economic and social structure in which human beings live. It is not ethics that God makes possible; it is alienation and exploitation.

Marx had realized this as early as his doctoral dissertation. Long before he elaborated a dialectical humanism, he had abridged and made his own the words of Prometheus from Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound* (l. 975): "ᾧ Ἁπλῳ λογῳ, τους παντους εχθαιρω θεους." Prometheus becomes the hero of philosophy, and his declaration is truncated by Marx to become the maxim for humanity and the mission of philosophy. Philosophy must take from Prometheus "its own motto against all gods, heavenly and earthly, who do not acknowledge the consciousness of man as the supreme divinity."[34] Human consciousness, still the focus of fundamental thinking, was not to yield absolute dependence, but in sharp contrast its own absolute supremacy. Even as early as March of 1841, God was posed as the antithesis — not the support or engagement — of a free human life.

It is critically important to see that the destruction of belief in God became for Marx an ethical imperative — not simply a political or social strategy. Marx even employs Kant's vocabulary: this destruction is a "categorical imperative."[35] Religious thinkers can never understand the character of authentic Marxism unless they understand this profoundly moral commitment, as if to the stamping out of a virulent disease. Marx's is one of the earliest expressions of this hatred for the person of God, found in his dissertation with its apotheosis of the person of Prometheus.[36] What Christ is to Kant, Prometheus is to Marx: the embodiment of a morally developed humanity. With the Prometheus of

33. Marx, *Contribution,* p. 50; emphasis in the original. This project, the criticism of religion, contains the fundamental call to be radical: "To be radical is to grasp the root of the matter. But for man the root is man himself. The evident proof of the radicalism of German theory, and hence of its practical energy, is that it proceeds from a resolute positive abolition of religion."

34. Karl Marx, *The Difference between the Natural Philosophy of Democritus and the Natural Philosophy of Epicurus,* "Forward to Thesis," in *Marx and Engels on Religion,* p. 15. The full sentence in Aeschylus reads: "In one word, I hate all the gods that received good at my hand and with ill requite me wrongfully," as in the translation of Herbert Weir Smyth, *Aeschylus,* Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard, 1973), p. 305.

35. Marx, *Contribution,* p. 42.

36. For an illuminating development of this theme, see Joseph C. McLelland, *Prometheus Rebound: The Irony of Atheism* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988).

Marx, humanity is now in competition with God. God, the relentless enemy of Prometheus, is the antihuman. To destroy this God constitutes a moral claim upon human beings, just as Prometheus knew and suffered for the death of Zeus that was to come if Prometheus remained faithful — a death devoutly to be wished.

Ethics and the death of God merged in Friedrich Nietzsche in two ways. The death of God is already a cultural, even an epistemological, phenomenon: belief in the Christian God has become unbelievable.[37] His death is not an event to come or to be worked, as with Marx, but an event which has already occurred; but, like the bursting of a great star billions of light-years away, its news has not yet reached human beings — though human beings have effected this death themselves. And how have human beings accomplished this? By their own cultural development, a development into the forms of knowledge and morality that Nietzsche's *Gay Science* traces through the first three books that build to the death of God. Human beings have developed from a growing set of perceptions and experiences, uncommon common sense about humanity (bk. 1), through advances in affectivity and art (bk. 2), to disciplined knowledge, logic, science, and morals — all of which lead inevitably to the death of God (bk. 3). Human development necessitates God's death. Moral courage demands that this death be acknowledged.

One should emphasize that Nietzsche is not arguing an ontological change, but an epistemological one, something very close to the sociology of knowledge: Christian belief has become unbelievable. He is asserting what is incapable of human faith any longer. Locke wished to establish which objects human understanding is capable of entertaining; Nietzsche determines which objects are capable of belief — and the Christian faith in God is not among them. One can no longer believe even in this belief. Unlike Marx, Nietzsche does not attempt to bring this death to pass, but to formulate a teaching to deal with its aftermath.

Thus Spoke Zarathustra celebrates Zarathustra as a moral teacher of a wisdom he is eager to give away. His teaching is to counter the nihilism that could issue out of the death of God. His premise is almost the exact opposite of Kant's conclusion: the ethical enterprise emerges in its shape and necessity from the cultural fact of the death of God: "I teach you the Overman."[38] The

37. Nietzsche's specification of the death of God is precise and nuanced and deserves to be cited as a corrective to its misunderstanding in popular usages: "Das größte neuere Ereigniss, — daß 'Gott todt ist,' das der Glaube an den christlichen Gott unglaubwürdig ist — beginnt bereits seine ersten Schatten über Europa zu werfen." See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Fröhliche Wissenshaft,* V, no. 343, in Giorgio Colli and Massino Montinari, *Nietzsche Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1973), vol. 2, pt. 5, p. 255.

38. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking Press, 1968), prologue, no. 3, p. 12 (punctuation slightly altered).

Overman becomes the new moral ideal. The position Prometheus held in the honor of Marx, the Overman holds in the moral aspirations of Nietzsche: the human must be overcome in the heroic progress to the Overman. The mission of Zarathustra takes its issue from this call of the heroic: "I shall show them the rainbow and all of the steps to the Overman."[39] His instructions stood in contrast to the lessons of the "teachers of virtue" and their securing of contagious sleep for humanity.[40]

If the Overman is the great challenge to human history, the will to power is its basic moral energy: "A new will I teach men: to *will* this way which man has walked blindly, and to affirm it, and no longer to sneak away from it like the sick and decaying."[41] The heroic will constituted the fundamental moral dynamism. "Alas, that you would understand my word: 'Do whatever you will, but first be such as are *able to will!*' "[42] And the entire "On Old and New Tablets" builds in hymn to the sovereign will: "O thou my will! Thou cessation of all need, my *own* necessity! Keep me from all small victories! Thou destination of my soul, which I call destiny! Thou in-me! Over-me! Keep me and save me for a great destiny!"[43]

But all of this is cast into ambiguity when the realization dawns that no victory or no achievement is final, that there is no final overcoming. The return of all things and of all states is sempiternal. All victories are provisional. With a finite amount of matter in the universe and an eternal quantity of time, everything must reoccur endlessly — indeed had already endlessly reoccurred.[44] All of the past, even the "last man," will return, and return endlessly.[45] The hope for something beyond the provisional only mirrors the efforts and the history of Sisyphus. This realization works a profound change in Zarathustra. He becomes the teacher of the eternal recurrence, and this intractable return of the same posed the fundamental challenge to the project to which he has given his life. The eternal return becomes the alternative to the creating God.

Thus Spoke Zarathustra must put the three together: the Overman, the will to power, and the eternal return. One becomes the Overman — realizes the possibilities of her or his humanity supremely — by willing absolutely the

39. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* prologue, no. 9, p. 24; see no. 3, p. 12.

40. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* pt. I, no. 2, "On the Teachers of Virtue," pp. 28-30.

41. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* pt. I, no. 3, "On the Afterworldly," p. 32.

42. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* pt. III, no. 5, "On Virtue That Makes Small," p. 172.

43. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* pt. III, no. 12, "On Old and New Tablets," p. 214.

44. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* pt. III, no. 2, "On the Vision and the Riddle," pp. 155-56.

45. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* pt. III, no. 13, "The Convalescent," pp. 217-20. Zarathustra is taught by the animals to accept and to proclaim the eternal return.

eternal return, by loving and accepting the eternal return.[46] This radically redefines the heroic human being. He or she becomes a process of development, of advance toward the Overman. The finality of human nature is to become a bridge to the Overman, while the foundation of human nature is fundamentally the will to power. Human activity must be recognized in its possibilities and in its glory in these terms.

Nietzsche can then move atheistic consciousness to a deeper level than Marx. What is God? The antihuman, the destruction of the entire heroic and humanistic project of Zarathustra and the progression of humanity to the Overman. God is the limit, the finitude of humanity. All of Zarathustra's doctrine pounds against God as against its absolute contradiction. "But let me reveal my heart to you entirely, my friends: If there were gods, how could I endure not to be a god! Hence there are no gods. Though I drew this conclusion, now it draws me."[47] The human being and God: one is necessarily the refusal of the other.

Lastly, human development is furthered by Sigmund Freud in a manner no less passionate than Friedrich Nietzsche's. Freud undertakes his treatment of religion and religious ideas in order to call his readers to advance beyond illusion into a world where affirmations are rationally grounded, through a process that he terms "'*education to reality.*' Need I confess to you that the sole purpose of my book is to point out the necessity for this forward step?"[48] The removal of God, of this illusion, will throw human beings on their own resources, as both Marx and Nietzsche also argued. Only then will one learn to make a proper use of human abilities. Atheism emerges in Freud's writings as a necessary condition for the Enlightenment's project of self-realization and self-reliance. The destruction of conviction about God is the beginning of authentic human freedom, though Freud's resultant ethics emerges much more stoic than that of his predecessors. For

> men are not entirely without assistance. Their scientific knowledge has taught them much since the days of the Deluge, and it will increase their power still further. And, as for the great necessities of Fate, against which there is no help, they will learn to endure them with resignation.[49]

Like Nietzsche, Freud found in the advance of science the extirpation of religion.

Through a consideration of the origins and path of development, thought Freud, one can offer an assessment of the past and trace the emergence of God

46. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* pt. III, no. 16, "The Seven Seals (Or: The Yes and Amen Song)," pp. 228-31.

47. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* pt. II, no. 2, "Upon the Blessed Isles," p. 86.

48. Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion,* trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961), p. 49 (emphasis his).

49. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion,* p. 50.

and religion as a mental asset for the self-protection of civilization. The basic force or drive behind any human development, even that of religious ideas, is the same: "The libido there follows the paths of narcissistic needs and attaches itself to the objects which ensure the satisfaction of those needs."[50] To understand the needs out of which religion has come, it is essential to recognize that parallel to the components of the total human personality — the superego, the ego, and the id — stands the corresponding and massive cultural triad that is civilization, the human person, and nature. These are lodged in continual hostility and threat — and their intractable struggle provides the context or horizon of intelligibility for the emergence of religion. Each component is mortally hostile to the others and must maintain its own integrity, influence, and control through continual dominance.[51] Hostility, threat, struggle, and control — these characterize the context in which Freud examines religion.

Within this structure of endless conflict, one asks about the psychological significance of religious ideas. They are technically illusion; that is, beliefs not grounded in evidence but in wish fulfillment and formulated to handle the threats delivered by nature and by civilization.[52] Seemingly promising, these illusions are ultimately destructive of human growth. Religion apes, as well as supports, civilization. Civilization is constituted by knowledge and regulations; religion, by beliefs and practices. Religion mirrors, as well as suggests, psychopathologies: as beliefs or illusion, religion corresponds to Meynert's amentia, a "state of acute hallucinatory confusion"; and as practice, it can be seen as a universal obsessive neurosis — issuing out of the Oedipus complex.[53] Religion is ersatz civilization, substituting for the knowledge and rational conduct of culture irrational beliefs and obsessive practices. When civilization is inadequate or when it falters, religion subsumes the three tasks of civilization against nature: human "self-regard, seriously menaced, call for consolation; life and the universe must be robbed of their terrors; moreover, human curiosity, moved, it is true, by the strongest practical interest, demands an answer."[54] On the other hand, the beliefs and practices of religion can reconcile the human person to the instinctual renunciations demanded by civilization.

The lengthy genesis of the idea of God can be traced from pre-animistic or magical stages, animistic stages, through totemism and polytheism to monotheism. For Freud also, the "death of God" occurs, but not as the Marxist project for the future or Nietzsche's epistemological fact in the recent past. This death

50. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, p. 24.
51. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, chaps. 1-2, pp. 5-14.
52. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, pp. 30-33.
53. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, p. 43 and n. 3.
54. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, p. 16.

occurs rather at the origins of religion — as the historical event of the killing and eating of the primeval father by the sons, the regret and fear that followed this event and the rules of totemism that arose as an attempt to ease the guilt and to appease the father. God emerges out of human history, rather than out of ethics (as with Kant) or out of human religious experience (as with Schleiermacher). The death of God is not the terminus of belief, as with Nietzsche, but its origin. As he wrote in his study of Leonardo da Vinci: "Psycho-analysis has made us aware of the intimate connection between the father-complex and belief in God, and has taught us that the personal God is psychologically nothing other than a magnified father."[55]

God is not a neutral statement leveled at humanity. Religious ideas become destructive of the human, inhibiting responsibility and growth. "The whole thing is so patently infantile, so foreign to reality, that to anyone with a friendly attitude to humanity, it is painful to think that the great majority of mortals will never be able to rise above this view of life."[56] So profoundly does God inhibit human development that religion can be listed as the great enemy of science: "Of the three powers which may dispute the basic position of science, religion alone is to be taken seriously as an enemy."[57]

What is the future of religious ideas, of God? Marginalization and extinction. There will be an increasing turning away from religion as human beings develop in their rationality, and to inhibit this disengagement would be to inhibit that human development. Gradually, painfully, the human intellect is coming into its own and breaking the bonds around it, placed and tightened by religion: "The voice of the intellect is a soft one, but it does not rest till it has gained a hearing. Finally, after a countless succession of rebuffs, it succeeds. This is one of the few points on which one may be optimistic about the future of mankind, but it is in itself a point of no small importance. . . . The primacy of the intellect lies, it is true, in a distant, distant future, but probably not in an infinitely distant one."[58] The lines between the enlightened and the religious could not be more antagonistically drawn: rational and irrational, humane development and blind inhibitions, knowledge and belief, realistic and obsessive practice.

55. Sigmund Freud, *Leonard da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood,* trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, n.d.), p. 103. See Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism,* trans. Katherine Jones (New York: Vintage, 1939), pt. III, sec. 1, pp. 102-10.

56. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents,* trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961), p. 21.

57. Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis,* trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1965), p. 160.

58. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion,* p. 53 (emphasis his).

V. A Reflection

The apologetics of the early nineteenth century argued to the reality of God from human nature and its entailments: God makes possible human life in the fullest sense. The rising atheism of the later decades of that century also took the human as the point of departure, as the arena within which the struggle was to be conducted, and argued exactly to the opposite conclusion: God alienates humanity from itself and from its promise.

This attack was conducted by a philosophical anthropology that moved through differing and at times overlapping levels in its analysis of the human being and of human development. Feuerbach saw the human being as sensuous self-consciousness, with this self-consciousness uniquely able to focus upon the human species; for Marx, this sensuous self-consciousness was both socially constituted in communal solidarity and called to engage in human life as revolutionary praxis; for Nietzsche, what lay beneath all praxis, however revolutionary, was the human being as the dynamism of the will to power, the bridge to the Overman and heroic human transcendence; for Freud, the human being was psychologically constituted even in the eros of its self-affirmation and life by its collective and personal history, and by the inner struggles of its psychic components and its development, identified with progress, toward scientific rationality.

For all of these, God loomed as the great enemy. For Feuerbach, belief in God fixed the human essence outside of itself; for Marx, it alienated the human person from the practical, revolutionary activity by which alone praxis could achieve freedom; for Nietzsche, God was the external finitude of the Overman as something which would always transcend and so limit in frustration the Overman; for Freud, belief in God was the permanent infantilization of the human being.

What actually happened to the understanding of God under this massive rise of atheism in the nineteenth century? Much more occurred than the conception of God as a projection of the human, a grammatical realization that theology was really anthropology. Something much darker and more destructive had been discovered in the divine. One can take a leaf from another book to address this question.

When Ignatius of Loyola in his *Spiritual Exercises* wanted to name the diabolical, to specify what Fyodor Dostoyevsky's Ivan called "the spirit of self-destruction and non-existence," he did not use the term "Satan," and only rarely the name "Lucifer."[59] He spoke repeatedly of "el enemigo de natura humana"

59. For "Lucifer," see the "Meditación de dos Banderas," in the *Spiritual Exercises, Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu, Monumenta Ignatiana,* ser. II, vol. 1, *Exercitia Spiritualia,* ed. Josephus Calveras and Candidus de Dalmases (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis

— the enemy of human nature.[60] The profound insight into the diabolical carried by this designation resumes a great deal of scriptural tradition and bears very much upon the dialectics of the nineteenth century: the diabolical is the destructively antihuman. Nietzsche perceptively saw this conclusion implicit in the commitments of Continental atheism:

> Theologically speaking — listen closely, for I rarely speak as a theologian — it was God himself who at the end of his days' work lay down as a serpent under the tree of knowledge: thus he recuperated from being God. — He had made everything too beautiful. — The devil is merely the leisure of God on that seventh day.[61]

This emerges as the final and devastating judgment upon all religious reality: God is the alienation of humanity from its own essence, from its social freedom, from its dynamic possibilities, from its mature self-responsibility and growth. God is the enemy of humanity. This is the unique conclusion of the atheism whose rise one can trace in the nineteenth century. It can subsequently assume even the experiences that go with the "religious," with all of its sense of integrity and dedication, so long as with John Dewey one will separate "the religious" from the concept of God, dismissing the latter as fundamentally incredible to the cultivated.[62] This judgment — that underneath the mask of God one finds not so much the visage of the human as the face of Satan — is perhaps the most radical change in religious understanding in the history of religious belief. The divine has been turned into the diabolical. God has been transformed into Satan.

Iesu, 1969), nos. 136, 137, and 138. For Dostoyevsky, see "The Grand Inquisitor," pt. 2, bk. 5, chap. 5 of *The Brothers Karamazov,* trans. David Magarshack (Baltimore: Penguin, 1958), vol. I, p. 295.

60. Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises,* nos. 7, 10, 135, 325, 326, 327, 334; see also *enemigo,* nos. 8, 12, 217, 274, 314, 320, 325, 329, 347, 349, 350.

61. Friedrich Nietzsche, "Beyond Good and Evil," in *Ecce Homo,* trans. and ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1989), p. 311.

62. See the proposals of John Dewey in *A Common Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934).